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THE FORWARD MOVEMENT IN MISSOURI, WEST VIRGINIA AND INDIANA

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In referring to the movement for better social conditions in Missouri, I want, first of all to mention the excellent plan for organizing their forces adopted and carried into effect by the various bodies of Missouri interested in the different problems involved. Twelve of the principal organizations of labor, social workers, physicians and women's clubs formed a committee on social legislation to present for passage in the General Assembly of 1911 bills for state-wide factory inspection, state-wide child labor restriction and a nine-hour workday for women. This committee appointed a secretary and opened an office in St. Louis for conducting an aggressive educational campaign over the state, and for pushing the desired measures through the legislature.

The child labor bill now pending¹ provides for extending the law to cover the entire state instead of only cities with a population of more than ten thousand, as at present. The nine-hour day for working children is changed in the bill to an eight-hour day. Until recently this restriction of the law's application to larger cities was justified, because manufacturing was practically confined within the larger communities of the state, but to-day these conditions are rapidly undergoing a change; many smaller towns are developing industrially through the growth of local enterprises and the establishment of branch factories by large concerns in the principal cities. The bill now pending is designed to give the same measure of protection to working children in the smaller towns as their fellows in the big cities now enjoy. However, no law can be of any value to a community without provisions for enforcement. The Missouri department of factory inspection now has power to enforce the law only in cities with a population of more than ten thousand. Hence, if the provisions of the child labor law are made to apply

¹ Became a law April 7, 1911.

to the entire state, the authority of the factory inspectors must be correspondingly extended. It was for just this purpose, and to put the department officers on a salary basis that the factory inspection bill was introduced.

West Virginia

In West Virginia, unfortunately, the degree of correlation between the compulsory education and child labor laws has heretofore been so small as to make them virtually antagonistic. Compulsory education and the restriction of child labor form the principal part of the program for the training and protection of children in nearly every state of the Union. These two elements of the great constructive plan for child welfare are complementary, and to insure the successful operation of the whole program the close relationship of the one to the other must be recognized. The full benefit of compulsory education cannot be realized if young children are allowed freely to engage in gainful occupations during the hours in which the public schools are not in session; neither will the opportunity for education which the state seeks to grant, through the prevention of child labor, be fully taken advantage of unless attendance at school is required. Physical strain from excess of work defeats the aim of the state in the one case, while the evil effects of idleness are the consequence of the other. The compulsory education law of the Mountain State is one of the best in the country, and last month the legislature passed a very good child labor bill prohibiting children under fourteen years from being employed at any time of the year in factories, mills or workshops, and requiring children fourteen to sixteen years of age, employed in such establishments, to secure from their local school authorities an employment certificate which is issued only after adequate proof of age and evidence of schooling through the fourth grade are submitted. The enactment of this law, however, is only the first step in the movement for child labor reform in West Virginia, because there are many lines of work to which the fourteen-year age limit does not apply, and, moreover, there is no limit to the number of hours of work, nor prohibition of labor at night or at dangerous occupations for children between fourteen and sixteen years of age. A bill containing such provisions was introduced into the legislature but was ignored by the members on account of the quiet but very effective opposition

of the glass manufacturers, and after the Assembly had wasted half the session wrangling over the organization of the Senate and the election of two United States senators, there was not time enough left to fight for this bill, and consequently our efforts were centered upon the certificate measure; the passage of the latter was secured only at the eleventh hour and by the most determined and persistent effort of those supporting it. One excellent feature of this new law gives to truant officers and agents of the State Humane Society, as well as the Commissioner of Labor, the power to inspect factories as to child labor and to report violations for prosecution.

Indiana Restricts Employment of Children

The most stubbornly contested measure before the Indiana legislature which adjourned on March 6th, was the child labor bill, the purpose of which was to give to the working children of the Hoosier State the same protection as to hours, night labor and employment in dangerous occupations as the children of Ohio, Illinois and many other states have for some time past enjoyed. The Democratic majority was pledged to strengthen the child labor law of the state, and Governor Marshall in his first message to the legislature made specific recommendations as to what the changes in the law should be. He urged that "no child under fourteen years of age be permitted to work for pay, and that no child of any age be permitted to labor for more than eight hours, nor at night, and that no child be employed in any immoral or extra hazardous occupation." The bill was drawn on these recommendations, the eight-hour day and prohibition of employment at night or at dangerous work applying to children under sixteen years, while girls under eighteen were forbidden to work in tobacco factories, breweries, hotels, theatres and drug stores.

The measure, introduced at the beginning of the session, was not passed until the end, while during the interval a bitter fight was waged between the employers of children on the one side, and the State and National Child Labor Committees and the State Federations of Labor and Women's Clubs, which were co-operating, on the other. The largest and most persistent lobby of the session was placed in the state capitol by the enemies of the bill, and delegations from every corner of Indiana attended the many public hearings and exerted their influence to the utmost to secure its defeat.

Its voyage through the two branches of the legislature was rough and stormy, but it weathered the gale without loss or mishap, until it was entering port through the narrows of third reading in the Senate, where it squeezed through only after considerable damage had been done. It suffered amendments by which canning factories are permitted to employ children of twelve years from June to October, the eight-hour day was changed to a nine-hour day and the eighteen-year age limit for girls in the several establishments named was reduced to sixteen.

The bill as drawn would have made Indiana's child labor law practically uniform with the laws of the adjoining states of Ohio and Illinois, but unfortunately the legislature at the eleventh hour yielded to the tremendous pressure brought to bear by the manufacturers and refused to incorporate in the laws of the state the principle of the eight-hour day for working children. However, one of the most important sections, that prohibiting night labor by children under sixteen years of age, remained intact.

The arguments of the manufacturers against the eight-hour day for children were to the effect that if such a provision were passed they would be unable to adjust their business systems so as to permit their employees, who would be affected by the law, to work only eight hours, while the older ones worked nine or ten hours, and therefore they would be obliged to discharge all such children, and this would cause suffering among their families and result in enforced idleness, which would bring on evil social consequences. However, these arguments were based entirely upon assumption, inasmuch as these employers had not tried the eight-hour day for children, and consequently could not speak from experience. The only practical way to judge the merits of such a provision is to note its effect upon a manufacturing community, where such a law has actually been in operation for some time. These same arguments were presented in Ohio by the opponents of the eight-hour bill for children in 1908, but nevertheless the bill was passed and none of the dire consequences predicted have come to pass. The number of children fourteen to sixteen years of age employed in Ohio factories and workshops was thirty-eight per cent greater in 1910 than in 1908 and 1909. In Cincinnati the average number of employment certificates issued to such children per month in 1909 and 1910 was nearly twice the average number issued in 1908 under the old law.

As most of these children are employed in establishments where the older employees work nine and ten hours per day, one is therefore safe in concluding that the eight-hour day for children is distinctly successful in its operation and, contrary to the assertion of its enemies, actually helps to decrease suffering and idleness by increasing the number of children at work. Parents are more willing to have their children enter gainful occupations if they have the satisfaction of knowing that the state will give them proper protection. It is to be regretted that the legislature of Indiana did not place the Hoosier State in line with Ohio, Illinois and other leading states of the Union, which have already thrown this safeguard about their child laborers.